PRINCIPLES FOR AN EFFECTIVE DASHBOARD ON U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

The United States Government hosts two dashboards to provide information on how and where it spends U.S. foreign assistance. These are:

- ForeignAssistance.gov (hosted by the Department of State)
- Foreign Aid Explorer (hosted by USAID)

Despite purporting to report similar information, figures on both dashboards vary considerably. Consequently, the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016 (FATAA) requested that State and USAID coordinate and consolidate the data collection process and presentation of the two websites by the end of fiscal year 2018.

In order to provide useful information, any dashboard should consider the needs of various users; provide as timely information as possible; and strive to provide comprehensive, complete, and reliable data.

Principles to consider for an effective U.S. foreign assistance dashboard include:

1. **Publish once, use often**: All foreign assistance data should be collected into a single government-wide source, ideally drawn from as close to the originating office as possible. Publishers should then reuse and republish from this single source. Practically, this means that the same data, re-formatted as needed, should be used for the Green Book, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), FATAA, and International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Data should be published under an open license.

2. **Well-defined:** Different data is useful for different analyses. For example, planned, obligated, and disbursed data may all be useful, but the data should be clearly defined on the site. Types of data should also be reflective of terms used by the U.S. Government. Further, posting partial data for fiscal years may useful, but the incomplete nature of the information must be clearly marked so the user understands the data limits. A well-defined process for data collection, timelines for publication, and the source of the data should also be clearly indicated.

3. **Updated and corrected**: There are trade-offs between timeliness of publication and verification of data. It is expected that data will be updated and corrected as needed and that should be done as promptly as possible. Such changes should also be clearly indicated to the user. Once data has been verified (e.g., obligated, expenditure data) that data should replace earlier, similar, data sets.

4. **Timely:** Planned data, such as Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) data, is useful and should be made available as structured data at the same or very similar time as the original CBJ. For other data, publication should be done at least quarterly.

5. **Sector comparability:** Depending on the user needs, it is helpful to be able to search the data by both the U.S. foreign assistance sector categories (primarily for U.S. only research) and the OECD DAC sector codes (primarily for analysis with U.S. and other donors).

6. **Program level:** Publishers should go beyond sharing purely financial information to include program details such as descriptions, locations, documents, and results. Gender disaggregated data is also valued.

7. **Sufficiently staffed:** The management of data collection and publication needs to be sufficiently staffed and overseen by the responsible U.S. agency to ensure that the institutional knowledge remains within the USG.